

STOREFRONT

for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

September 28, 1989

Thanks for accepting STOREFRONT's invitation to be a member of the Atlas Project Committee. Our first meeting is on Tuesday, October 3, 6:30pm at STOREFRONT. The agenda of the meeting is to identify, discuss and formulate the basic issues of the project we make it public. The conclusion of this meeting will generate a press release to introduce the project to the international press.

As you know, I have been researching to document historical and visual information about the 12 Atlas Missile Bases near the Plattsburgh Air Force Base in New York State. This materials will be collated in the next few months, to be included in the Competition Program as the background information for the project participants. Please review the attached materials before our meeting.

The agenda of the meeting is;

PURPOSE

We must define a clear picture of the relationship between art+architecture with the military. The result will give a validity to the project, and a set of premises for the participants to base their works from. The following categories are the topics to be discussed

DESIGN

Discussion on similarities and differences in the design process to the makings of art, architecture and military products.

TECHNOLOGY

Applications and influences by military innovations upon consumer goods, artistic developments and architectural environment.

HISTORY

Contribution by the military as a client and patron in the development of art and architecture.

MORAL

Judgement on the participation of art and architecture in the makings of the instruments of destruction.

UNDERGROUND

The potential for the underground nuclear facilities for providing guideline for the possible subterranean habitation and urbanism, protected from inhabitable atmosphere of the future.

OBJECTIVES

A set of goals to be achieved by the project, as what we hope to leave as products of our activities toward the field of art and architecture.

INTERVENTION

Injection of aesthetic forces within the confines of military structure.

EXPANSION

The enlargement of the role and function of art and architecture in the shaping of the mass and individuals of the society, and or participation within, comparable to the maginitude by the military.

Staff

Kyong Park: Founder/Director
Shirin Neshat: Co-Director
Stephen Korns: Discussion Program Director
Jane Dodds: Assistant Director
Leo Modricin: Graphic Design

Board of Advisors

Kent Barwick
Peter Cook
Richard Haas
Nam June Paik
Michael Sorkin
James Wines
Lebbeus Woods

Board of Directors

Clifton Balch
Modjeh Baratlou
Bridget Olive Brown
Frederick Ted Castle
Dan Graham
Richard Plunz
Lucio Pozzi

Project Atlas
Calvert Wright

During the early sixties, twelve Atlas Missile Sites were established in the Adirondack Region of New York State. During the Cold War's ensuing flurry of missile technology, the Atlas Missile was superceded by the intercontinental Titan missile. Today, the Atlas' empty silos, penetrating fourteen stories into the earth, lie dormant--filling with rainwater, robbed of their function.

If we are to believe Roland Barthes, that beauty is the anticipation of function--as opposed to the function itself, then surely these these missile silos, and the power of their anticipated function, must possess an exquisite beauty. *

The Atlas Missiles and all of their elaborate silo facilities were deemed "obsolete" by the Air Force less than three years after their completion. These missile silos were never even tested, much less activated. Obsolete? I think not. Obsolescence is a term defined by the particular function assigned to an object.

Ironically, research is currently underway that would redefine the function of American grain silos. A New York architectural firm has proposed that these facilities could be inexpensively retrofitted to help ease this nation's overcrowded prisons. Perhaps similar research of the potential crossprogramming of these missile silos is where ^{one of} the answers to Project Atlas lies.

^{many} If the function of these objects (silos) has yet to be discovered/rediscovered, how could they possibly be considered obsolete?

* If we buy the concept of beauty as the anticipation of function, does the realization of function detract from the aesthetic qualities of an object?
(not necessarily.)

Project Atlas invites you to submit proposals for the destruction, erasure, preservation, or reuse of abandoned Atlas missile sites. By instigating a critical investigation of these relics of public architecture and obsolete military technology, Storefront's objective is to challenge the present hegemony of policy makers and venture capitalists over the course of events and environments--with a display of the transformative power of artistic consciousness which can be brought to bear on the multi-polar, post-cold war era that we are just embarking on.

Visual images / First Experience
Written / Supportive

What are other people thinking about this -- dialogue.

Buzz words.

Carolyn Moskowitz statement

The American military constructed twelve Atlas nuclear missile bases during the Kennedy administration. Increasingly sophisticated military technology soon rendered the Atlas obsolete, and the missiles were all removed from site. The massive and elaborate underground silos which once sheathed the missiles remain, abandoned, on the former military bases.

The Storefront for Art & Architecture is sponsoring a competition to redefine the missile silos. Participants may choose to use, remove, build upon, transform, or destroy a part or whole of one, some, or all twelve sites. Chosen entries will be exhibited at Storefront as well as at a venue near the missile sites. Storefront will also host several symposia to furnish technical and historical information, and to engender discussion about the political, economic, social, and psychological implications of the missile bases. Members of the communities in which the sites are located will participate in these discussions.

*a forum that takes architecture into
rare & unvisited realm.*

Project Atlas Statement

Robert Werthamer

Project Atlas describes an attempt to redefine the potential of abandoned missile silo sites of the North East wilderness. The competition provides an opportunity for public participation in artistic action, for communities to affect their environments, symbols, and policies and provide alternatives to conventional modes of governmental dominance.

Discarded and deemed "obsolete" by the military forces which formed them, these powerfully evocative structures could still serve as public works. Transforming these structures for unintended activities raises profound issues into the relationship between their sublime form and sinister past.

Competitions and exhibitions could have a greater affect on discourse and the communities with which they serve if there exists the possibility of realization. Art and architecture can have radical effects when confronting the "real" world, to break outside the bounds of the gallery and provide different avenues of experience. By invoking the participation of local residents, this project can empower and connect the area's communities and the competition participants, rather than distance them and reinforce patterns of cultural hegemony. By providing the possibility of action, this project encourages a powerful place for artistic vision.

Transformation

Power

Public Space

Security

Danger

Use/Technology

Vision

Intention

Community

Obsolescence/Time

Rationalization

Julie Silliman's Atlas text (12/1/89)

Twelve Atlas InterContinental Ballistic Missiles, housed in underground silos in Northern New York State, were afforded their obligatory fifteen minutes of fame on October 22, 1962. On that day, President Kennedy in a televised statement warned the Soviets to cease shipment of missiles to Cuba "or else." The "or else" in this superpower chess game referred to, in part, the potential use of these missiles.

Atlas missiles came and went in rapid time leaving the nation's taxpayers with 300 million dollars in debt, Northern New York State with twelve elaborate 174 foot holes in the ground, and more than a few suddenly unemployed workers. Installed over the period of April to December 1962, the missiles were, less than two years later, phased out and removed in favor of the entirely new Titan II and Minutemen systems. By April 1962 the last Atlas missile had left on a truck bound for California.

Through this competition entrants may choose to inform us about military decision making and defense waste. Or, they may raise the issues of government/military intrusion upon, and long-range disruption of, rural communities and regional economies. This Atlas competition and subsequent exhibition to be held not only at Storefront, but also at a location near the sites, could revitalize the effected communities through reexamination and reclamation of these relics of a cold war moment.

STOREFRONT

for Art & Architecture

97 Kenmare Street New York, NY 10012 212-431-5795

October 30, 1989

Dear

The third Project Atlas meeting is scheduled for next Monday, November 6th at 6 p.m.

The agenda is as follows:

1. Report on meeting #2 in which a statement of the program seemed to be agreed on by those present (Carolyn Moskowitz, Maniatis, David Hanawalt, Julie Silliman, Calvert Wright, Kyong Park, myself)
2. Finalizing of program statement
3. Program "package"
4. Schedule
5. Press release and strategy for announcement (please think of press and school contacts that would most likely be new to Storefront)

Please come.



Staff

Kyong Park: Founder/Director
Shirin Neshat: Co-Director
Stephen Korns: Discussion Program Director
Jane Dodds: Assistant Director
Leo Modricin: Graphic Design

Board of Advisors

Kent Barwick
Peter Cook
Richard Haas
Nam June Paik
Michael Sorkin
James Wines
Lebbeus Woods

Board of Directors

Clifton Balch
Modjeh Baratloo
Bridget Olive Brown
Frederick Ted Castle
Dan Graham
Richard Plunz
Lucio Pozzi

ATLAS PROJECT:

Early Morning Text on the Subject of Obsolescence

The term, 'built-in obsolescence', applies to what? "Everything" it would seem. "Everything" has both a built-in capacity to wear out and a built-in capacity to become obsolete. In our time, the tendency to become obsolete has far outstripped the tendency to wear out. On one hand this leaves us with functional objects and systems which are no longer functional, a moronic statement that, nevertheless, is modern civilized fact: Stereos, Televisions, Typewriters, Ships, Cars, Buildings, Motors, Medicines, Pesticides, Bombs, Teaching Methods, Financial Products, Genetically altered bacteria.

My parents liked to tell me the story of visiting a military airbase with 360 aircraft sitting quietly in rows, obsolete the day they came off the production line. While the phenomena of rapid obsolescence (by history's standard) is pervasive, it is more spectacular in the case of military paraphenalia. The expenses, technology, and effort discarded make for such absurd tales and images that they wonder to the eyes of a child; the obsolescence is a story unto itself. If it were only for children, it might comprise a fairy tale (with a moral, no doubt). Since the phenomena belongs primarily to the adult world (toys being a significant, notable exception), we may interpret humongous military obsolescence as one of the potent mythological phenomena of our time. In this respect, the abandoned Atlas Missile silos are shrines to that myth; representative locations of our national spiritual heritage. Perhaps more so than a church.

Rather a dark symbol, wouldn't you say. Now, what are we going to do about it.

The role of statement is
to expose the implications
of this strange hidden functionality.

o One House of God.
House for the Machine.

- o Form as an issue of its own
- o Symbol - not used / functional?
- o Anthropocentric
- o Sublime - How did it come to a NIGHTMARE
- o minus the missile, it is cute
- o Community: context IMPOTENT
- o Shrine: spiritual institution
- o Mapping - global location. GLOBAL NETWORK
GEOGRAPHICALLY UNRELATED
- o Planned obsolescence
- o Ultimate author of technology
IS NATURE